



CHARACTERISTICS OF 21ST CENTURY LEARNERS: ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

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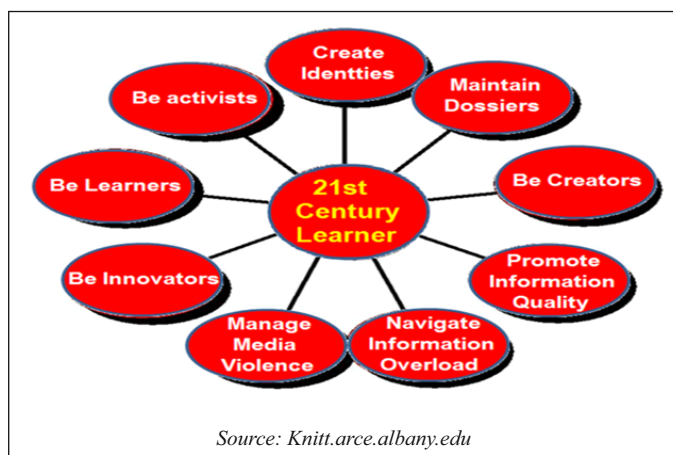
ABSTRACT

In this fast-changing world, the education plays a major role in empowering students to engage with challenges. The purpose of this article is to identify the role of teacher education in the needed characteristics of 21st century learners of India. In this hasty changing world, the education plays a major in empowering students to engage with challenges. The 21st century is rapidly changing one in every dimension of human (economically, socially, and technologically). Due to the rapid changes complex problems are faced by students. So, they should acquire some special quality. These are as follows a) having life planning b) flexibility and adaptability c) productivity and accountability d) leadership and responsibility e) critical thinking, creative, and innovative f) problem solving g) communication h) collaborative & team work i) lifelong learning j) Technology literacy etc.

KEY WORDS: Teacher education, 21st century learners, quality of learners.

INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of education is to prepare the next generation. We want them to be productive and good members of our communities. So as the world evolves, our education system must follow suit to ensure we are preparing our kids for life within it. In the busy and bustling 21st century our basic systems are transforming at a pace never seen before. The way we access and spread information, our work habits, methods of socializing and much more have been revolutionized by increasing sophistication of technology. 21st century learners are wildly different in some way from the past generation, so it is important to us to get know the characteristics of 21st century learners. Being a independent learner they build on other's ideas, state on idea and confirm they have been understood. And also, they use technology and digital media strategically and capably for enhancing their reading, writing, speaking, listening and language skills. They are familiar with the strengths and limitations of various technological tools and mediums and can select and use those best suited to their communication goals. They more mature to compare which one is better for them. As we inspire students to be lifelong learners, we must focus on collaboration, systems thinking, developing empathy, ease in communication and the use of technologies that serve to help us tackle real world issues. Technology has influenced 21st century students the way they learn, get the information, think and interact. They have become collaborative, autonomous, exploratory and connected learners.



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THE BASIC FOCUS OF THE PAPER:

The paper is solely based on secondary data. The different sources of data are journal articles, websites, e-books, reports of various organization and commission, articles published in international, national and local papers etc. This paper gives a brief description of the role of teacher education in the shaping of different characteristics of 21st century learners of India.

SKILLS AND COMPETENCY OF 21ST CENTURY LEARNERS: CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION:

In today's world of global competition and task automation, innovative capacity and creative spirit are fast becoming requirements for professional and personal success. Both the National Education Association (2012) and Andain and

Murphy (2008) believe that if children are leaving school without having this innovative capacity and not knowing how to be creative, they are at risk of being underprepared for the workforce and challenges that society brings. Creative skills and innovation are highly desired in the 21st century learner. 21st century children need to be able to think creatively, work creatively with others and also implement innovation in their everyday lives (NEA, 2012; partnership for 21st century skills, 2009).

COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION:

Humans are social creatures and communication has always been key to our survival. Students' access to social media and other communication platforms have primed them to engage with people of different opinions, expectations and culture. Collaborative learning tends to trigger other positive outcomes such as higher-level reasoning, increased transfer of learning, greater motivation to succeed, stronger social and cognitive development and increased time on task. Learning to collaborate effectively will greatly increase any given students' employment opportunities in the future as the collaboration of knowledge is a key factor of today's global corporate world. The ability to communicate effectively is an essential integrant in any successful collaboration between students. Students need to have the ability to present their ideas articulately through a range of oral, written and non-verbal communication platforms (P21CS, 2009; NEA, 2012). In order to become an effective communicator, students must first learn to listen effectively. The 21st century learner, as a communicator, must be fluent in tools and technologies that enable communication and collaboration anywhere, anytime. They do not only know how to do communication, they also know how to facilitate, stimulate, control, moderate and manage communication.

CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING:

Knowledge is power, but in the age of the World Wide Web determining what's useful and what's not, is a skill in itself. In a constantly changing world, students' need the ability to think critically and solve any problem which may occur in their lives (P21CS, 2009; NEA; 2012; Pacific policy research center, 2010). Critical thinking skills will also be essential in the future work environment where constant tech change will require fast adaptation. Students need to have the ability to make connections between arguments and knowledge sources. Critical thinking involves accessing, analyzing and synthesizing information and can be taught, practiced and mastered (P21, 2007a, Redecker et al, 2011). Critical thinking also draws on other skills such as communication, information literacy and the ability to examine, analyze, interpret and evaluate evidence. Problem solving has always involved teamwork and cooperation. Successful problem-solving in the 21st century requires effective and create collaboration between learners, who must keep pace with evolving technology and handle vast amounts of often-contradictory information.

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP:

Digital citizenship is a vital skill for 21st century learners – knowing how to participate productively and responsibly online. It is essential to help students understand how to participate intelligently and ethically as responsible citizens in virtual communities. This involves learning how to assess the reliability and quality of information found on the internet and using information gained in a responsible manner (Davies, Fielder and Gorbis, 2011). Schools may offer the most appropriate setting for individuals to learn and practices how to use technology in a responsible manner (e.g. issues of data access, privacy protection, fraud detec-

tion, plagiarism, intellectual property rights and anonymity) and how to become good digital citizens (Leis, 2010).

GLOBAL COMPETENCE:

Globally competent learners are careful to consider previous approaches and the perspectives of others, they act ethically and collaboratively- in creative ways – to contribute to local, regional or global development. Globally competent learners do not presume they are equipped to handle complex challenges alone. They reflect candidly on their capacity to complete an assigned task and seek out collaborative opportunities to join with others whose strengths complement their own (Mansilla and Jackson, 2011). Social media usage and access to the web has made students more aware of their place in a diverse world. They are involved in conversation and issues that need to be tackled on a global scale. For example, health concerns, environmental protection and economic growth. Becoming a digital citizen complements the skill of collaboration and communication, as it allows students to effectively learn from and work collaboratively with a host of different individuals from diverse cultures, religion and lifestyles (Davy; 2011). This encourages classroom and work environment of open mindedness and mutual respect for one another (PPRC, 2010). Students can utilize their 21st century learning skills to understand and engage with global issues and diverse learning communities, better preparing them for the global workplace of tomorrow (Davy, 2011, NEA, 2012).

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE:

The ability to understand and communicate with each other across cultural barriers is a fundamental prerequisite for making societies work. All learners need to acquire intercultural competence. For this reason, intercultural education, which aims to develop and enhance this ability, can make an essential contribution to peaceful co-existence and inclusive learning (Barrett et al., 2014). However, intercultural competence is not acquired automatically, but instead needs to be learned, practiced and maintained throughout life. Educators at all levels play an essential role in facilitating the development of intercultural competence among learners (Barrett et al., 2014). Within culturally diverse societies, respect and tolerance are vital to ensuring that the views of individuals from all cultural backgrounds are fully acknowledged and respected. It is essential that students learn how to fully listen to others, demonstrate flexibility, and cooperate with contributors in interdisciplinary and intercultural teams. These are essential to be part of a culture that values participation, with ample opportunities to initiate, produce and share one's creations.

TECHNOLOGY LITERACY:

Technology is at the heart of just about all workplaces the majority of industries and economic spheres. The next generation digital natives though they may be need to be equipped with the skills to navigate the digital world. Incorporating technology into classroom and encouraging the development of skills such as coding and data analyzing can help students to really get a grip of the devices they will need to expertly wield in the future. Advanced technology and all forms of digital media are completely integrated into modern society and are an integral aspect of a 21st century learner's life, whether it be in how they learn, work or even socialize (Andain & Murphy, 2008). 21st century students are accustomed to frequent changes in technology and welcome any technological innovations as they occur (PPRC, 2010). The latest gadgets, applications, software and websites enable incredible transformation in the way we learn, whether it's personalization of lessons or gamification of the learning process. The 21st century educator understands and capitalizes upon this through not only keeping abreast of the latest trends, but also experimenting with new tools and techniques that can enhance their learning.

LIFELONG LEARNING:

21st century society is constantly evolving, as a result students need to have the ability to become lifelong learners in order to adapt to changes and succeed in modern society (Mauch, et. al., 2001). Globalizations and technological advancement are the key drivers for lifelong learning skills, and students need to adapt to these skill sets otherwise they will not become successful in later life (Mauch, et. al., 2001). 21st century learner should be lifelong learners. They must continue to absorb experiences and knowledge, also they should endeavor to stay current change and learn as the horizons and landscape changes.

ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN INDIA:

Teacher education in India has always been the biggest influencers in a student's life. Like all other industries, the education sector is going through huge transformations, largely because digital technology has changed the way the world works- and is changing the way children study.

India has one of the largest population of the younger generation (500 million of 5-24 year olds) in the world, which makes this sector even more complex and interesting at the same time. There is an inflow of remarkable investment in the education sector, with policy makers taking charge of bringing developments and innovation into action, through curriculum developments (Entrepreneurship Curriculum, Happiness Curriculum, CCE) and capacity building (Teacher trainings, infrastructural developments & Smart Classes).

ROLE OF TEACHERS:

Teachers themselves are a vital resource with great potential for preparing stu-

dents for their working lives. Beyond teaching student's pre-requisite skills, educators, and institutions need to take on the responsibility of helping students adapt learnt skills to their working life.

A holistic approach is key. This includes integrating soft skills (especially communication and collaboration) with different educational strategies. Educators most frequently cite the following teaching strategies as most effective alongside foundational literacies in developing the necessary skills needed in the 21st century learners:

- Soft skills - different types and forms of communication, collaboration, self-awareness etc.
- Active learning - engaging students in activities, such as reading, writing, discussion and/or problem solving.
- Project-based learning - students working on complex and/or real-world challenges.
- Cognitive activation - encouraging students to focus on the method they use to reach a solution rather than the solution itself.
- Personalized learning - addressing the needs and interests of individual students.

ROLE OF SKILL-BASED EDUCATION IS THE NEED OF THE FUTURE:

The future is individual learning, customized consumption and smaller learning spaces where students can learn in a fluid environment and can learn from each other - peer learning. The teacher-student relationship will face a dynamic change, when flipped classrooms become a norm rather than an exception in schools.

The ideas will be beyond the textbook and more aligned to the application of knowledge rather than assessment of retention. Flexible learning paths, focus on imparting life skills, student centric learning methods and use of technology are bringing in the concept of "Education 4.0"

ROLE OF MODERN TEACHING METHODOLOGY:

Modern teaching methodology is focused on thinking and analytical skills. The transferable abstract thinking skills and reflective observation in students helps in developing future careers. The process involves the use of project making, field trips, and facing challenges in a controlled environment. It is the bedrock of future success as it bridges the gap between learning and doing. The discrepancy between theory and practice is overcome. The learning curve is enhanced, and the methodology is instrumental in producing demonstrable mindset and behavioral changes.

ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN THE LEARNING PROGRAMME:

Technology has enabled improved interaction between communities, and educationists should look at tech as an enabler of greater methodology and new age pedagogy, not as a substitute to the educator. The use of technology to make learning more natural is the key to the future. When our daily lives are empowered by technology, there is no reason that teaching-learning should be deprived of it.

The gap remains when students are taught using only traditional methods, and the workplace is fraught with the use of technology. The student often fails to adapt and flounders, leading to a spectra of being a misfit in the employment jungle. The use of technology in classrooms has led to many positive changes in the learning curve of students. The use of technology has fuelled the impact on interdisciplinary learning and research-based innovation.

CONCLUSIONS:

It is no small measure a daunting task to be an educator in the current environment. At the same time, it has never been more critical in history that the Teacher Education of India today plays a strong and formative role in shaping the personalities and skills of 21st century learners. By engaging their curiosity, unique skills and tech-savvy minds, Teacher Education help carve out and reinforce, the distinguishing traits of this generation which they can take forward towards building even more efficient workplaces but more importantly, in repairing a world that is crying out for more awareness and attention.

In this globally and digitally interconnected world, all learners, from cradle to career, need new skills and knowledge to succeed. If we want to prepare our children for success in school, work and life, opportunities to learn 21st-century skills are essential. They not only provide a framework for successful learning in the classroom, but ensure students can thrive in a world where change is constant and learning never stops. And they are also tremendously important for our nation's well-being., we want our learners to enter the world with an understanding of what it takes to be a good citizen—one who can be civically engaged, critically thinking, digitally literate, globally aware, and an effective communicator.

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